METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR INTERFACING EXTERNAL RESOURCES WITH A NETWORK ELEMENT

ABSTRACT

External resources may be interfaced with a network element using an intelligent interface including an independent processing environment to enable the operational capabilities of the network element to be enhanced. The intelligent interface may serve as an interface to external resources such as network software repositories, storage servers, logging facilities and security services. By providing an intelligent interface, it is possible to interface external resources and enhanced services to the network element while allowing processing requirements to be offloaded to an external device or to the intelligent interface itself, so that the resources of the network element may be more fully utilized to perform network operations such as switching and routing functions. The intelligent interface also enables new resources to be made available to the network element when they are needed. An external communication port of the intelligent interface may be configured to operate using one of the USB standards.